

Good Morning

My name is Stephanie Pelletier and I reside in East Hartford, CT. I would like to thank the committee for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of the motorcycle training bill.

On May 30, 2008 around 7:30 am my door bell rang several times....a sound that makes me cringe to this day. At my door were two East Hartford police officers and a social worker. They came to tell me my 19 year son Nick Cohen was killed while riding on his motorcycle. It is a parent's worst nightmare - to lose my child and then to turn around and have to tell my nine year old twins that their brother was never going to come home.

Nick was a handsome kid. He was very personable, happy and a caring person. He was a role model at East Hartford High School. The sadness and grief my family and I felt after his death was overwhelming and was shared by the whole community.

Often times we hear of tragic accidents happening on a weekend night, when kids are out partying or fooling around. I want to stress that motorcycle accidents can happen anytime, even on an ordinary early morning like May the 30th. The night before Nick's accident, he went to his Grandmother's house to help her with a project and have dinner and he was home early. The following morning was a beautiful sunny day. On his way to work, Nick stopped at the bank and then was heading to his friend's house so they could ride to work together. A few miles from where he was going is where his life ended. Nick collided with a minivan and he was instantly killed. Nick was wearing his helmet and what should have been a beautiful ride to work, turned out to be a heartbreaking one.

Nick had a passion for motorcycles. Nick got his bike a little (less) than a year before his accident. As you can imagine, letting Nick get a motorcycle at such a young age was a very tough decision for me.

Through this difficult time I immediately knew I had to do something to help protect another parent from going through what I have. After Nick's death, I spent time learning about CT motorcycle laws. I wanted to see if there was anything I could learn from my tragic experience and be able to pass it on to others. I was amazed to find out how easy it is for someone to get a motorcycle permit and renew the permit with out formal training. I often wonder if Nick was required to go through formal training, would he be here today. I asked myself this question everyday which led me to start talking to State Representative Tim Larson.

Currently the State of CT has a motorcycle training course known as the Connecticut Rider Education Program. However, this program is only mandated for 16 & 17 year olds. What this means is anybody over the age of 17 can obtain a motorcycle permit without any formal training. I ask you to please consider the amendment before you, which would mandate that every driver seeking a motorcycle license be required to complete the Connecticut Rider Education Program.

I now hold Nick close to my heart by wearing locks of his hair in a locket on a chain and a yellow bracelet which says " Nick, Always loved, forever remembered. My hopes are that by mandating motorcycle training for everyone, I can save someone else's son or daughter, and save a parent from the pain I feel everyday. Thank you